

To be inserted in "An Appreciation" (28)
"The Silver Horn") See type-script. Page 2. Line 10.

... something more vivid and pictorial than the Fathers have to offer. There is, indeed, Whyte Melville, a high-spirited writer, and a fine Sportsman, but he is of an era that has passed away. He "dates" too definitely. So, obviously, does Surtees, but Whyte Melville's books are deficient in the very robust humour that has preserved Mr Jorrocks, and has endeared him to so many generations of ingenuous readers.] Paragraph

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MPC Catalogue

An Appreciation.

by

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The right to pontificate can hardly be denied to a Pope — I refer more particularly to Alexander — & one of his pronouncements seems to me especially appropriate to my subject.

“One Master-passion in the breast,
Like Aaron's Serpent, swallows up the rest.”

And of all the Master-passions none is more masterful than Foxhunting. Yet how scanty & inadequate is the literature that has been devoted to it! One would have said that a subject in which are bound up speed, danger, & beauty, would not have failed of its celebrants, yet, of late years, but three or four of all the pens of these islands, Headquarters of Hunting though they are, have been taken in hand to treat it worthily.

Imagination glorifies — perhaps excessively — the achievements of the Angler; Deer-stalking, very Big Game shooting, very Small Game shooting, tales of the Rod & the Gun, in all their moods & tenses, fill the library shelves that are dedicated to Sport.

When we look for the literature of Hunting, apart from serious manuals on Kennel Management & the like, there is little to find. Beekford, Radcliffe, “Nimrod”, those whose position is akin to that of The Fathers in Church history, are all pundits of a remote past. Then comes Surtees, who is in himself an Aaron's Serpent that gobbles up the rest!

But I will not be led astray into discussing

Surtess, nor discredit myself by the heresy of finding Jorrocks, save when he is actually hunting the fox, as improbable as he is boring. He is a convention that must be honoured, & it is a convention that shows, almost pathetically, the craving for something more vivid & pictorial than The Fathers have to offer. For some reason ~~which is~~ difficult to fathom, the hunting correspondent cultivates a style that is practical & formal even to grimness. Severely topographical reports, based on the Ordnance Survey maps, do not feed the fancy. The strain that they impose on the imagination is too severe. One might as well study the list of stations between Cork & Killarney, in order to recall the beauty of the lakes. What the reader, specially the reader who is far from home & hunting, longs for, is the milk of the word, the gossip of the run, the disasters, the fox that was found in a trap, the ex-suing comments of the Master, the confusion of the Covert-owner, the fallings-out, the fallings-off.

But, unfortunately, descriptions of this stimulating nature might result painfully in actions for libel and defamation of character — Horses' characters, or, more serious still, Hounds' characters — So, for the lights & shades of foxhunting we must look to Fiction, and, setting aside The Fathers and Surtess, there are not many books that are able to impart the authentic thrill. To meet with two such, that are moreover spiced with a certain exotic flavour, is a rare & unexpected pleasure, & one that I have savoured with much enjoyment. Mr Gordon Grand's books, "The Silver Horn" & "Colonel Weatherford and his Friends" are of the

company of the elect. Not since Mr David Gray's delightful Tales of Hunting & Racing, in "Gallops", have stories such as these, so fresh, so interesting, so warm with the glow of enthusiasm for the sports they celebrate, come my way.

And all, or nearly all, of these stories deal with sport in America.

In our insular arrogance we have discredited the possibility of correct, of what may be called Classic Foxhunting, out of the British Isles. To France we have conceded a sort of fancy-dress imitation of stag-hunting, and as to the Colonies, we have indulgently accepted the existence of "Bobbery Packs," ^{that are believed to} consist ~~of~~ of un-orthodox creatures of indefinite breeds, only warranted to hunt "anything that'll roar before Par them". [But Sport in the United States, until fairly recently, has been for the generality of British Sportsman, as problemat-ical as unknown. Now & then meteor-like members of the Great

Republic would flash through a British country, ^{but} still meteor-like, depart, leaving not a trace behind.

It is now a considerable number of years since a lady (whom I am proud to call my friend) went with her husband to Leicestershire, & amazed that stronghold of convention by riding astride. Two of the Law-givers of the Hunt, that my friends patronised, were over-
x - heard in perturbed debate.

"What is it?" said one.

"I don't know," said the other, "but it rides like hell!"

(And it may be said that the definition - illogical as a metaphor though it is - still applies.)

I regret that I cannot identify the American hunting country which is the scene of the stories in these two ~~very~~ ^{very} enjoyable books. But this is superfluous. All that the reader need bring to ensure his enjoyment, is to love the open air, & above all other created things, to love Horses & Dogs. The wind and

the wonder of wide & beautiful country is in them all. The stories are irradiate with sunshine, & good sport, & good spirits. Slight though some of them may be, there is not one that is 'nt worth while, & does 'nt impart an authentic thrill. The hero of both books, & the central figure of most of the stories, is the Super-sportsman, Colonel John Weatherford — a most comfortable character, who succeeds in all things, & never disappoints his admirers — among whom one reader, at least, is firmly established — while his correctness in all matters of hunting etiquette, costume, & observances generally, is of meticulous propriety. Of heroines there are several, all, naturally, perfect riders & lovely persons, & there is a brief but very pleasing glimpse of a secondary heroine, that is given to us when old Will Madden, the Huntsman, ~~talks~~ ^{Talks} by the fireside with old Woodsman, his leading & most trusted hound.

"That little Fantasy bitch, your daughter, Woodsman," he says, recalling to the old hound little Fantasy's prowess in hitting the line of the fox at a moment of crisis, when all seemed lost, & even Woodsman himself was baffled. "Her first season!" says old Will, "an' she hit it an' opened — opened wide she did! A high anxious kind o' little voice she have, & every hound honoured her — every hound, Woodsman! They believed her, an' it be her first-season! What a bitch she be, an' how they flew to her!"

There is a beautiful drawing of Woodsman, a pure-bred American hound. Only his head. A pensive, thoughtful, lovely face, of a type

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strange to England, but I have seen
one of the big black & tan Kerry Beagles with a
head ~~that~~ had much the same lean length.

I have visited several kennels of hounds
in America, & ^{there I} have ^(introduced to) seen packs of pure English-
-bred foxhounds, & pure-bred American hounds,
& hounds that were a cross between the two
breeds. The American hounds have a tall, light
elegance, with the rather light bone, & "hare's
feet"; that again bring the Kerry Beagles to mind.
I hope I may be pardoned for quoting what I have
said elsewhere of a very beautiful pack of this breed.

"The Hounds . . . were pure American . . . They were
of the orthodox three colours, black, white and tan,
with the long ~~hanging~~ hanging ears (that irresistibly
suggest the portraits of Mrs Barrett Browning)
& beautiful romantic eyes, & pointed tan toes,
that again suggest the Poetess, & would look charming
in black satin sandals."

Little as they conformed to Peterboro' standards,
they were singularly attractive in their own
way. I am reminded of a tale of an intelligent
little girl, who was, for the first time, taken to a
meet. She regarded the pack gravely, & remarked

"What a lot of dogs!"
She was corrected. "Those are Hounds, darling!"

She again studied the pack, & then said, contro-
-versially, "Well, they're very like dogs."

Thus with this pack, they were very like hounds.

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The supreme merit of the pure-bred American hounds is their fitness for their business. They can take a line unfalteringly through sandy woodlands, & speak to it on ~~hot~~ hot & dusty roads. That they have perseverance ^(that) one of these stories from which I have already quoted, "Trying", bears witness, while the mere fact that they are the breed that is favoured by Colonel John Weatherford is enough to sanction their acceptance in the most select Foxhound circles. I once had the good luck to see a pack of them in full cry after a fox, & tongue more tunable one could not wish to hear, though ~~for~~ all their likeness to the Black & Tans, their cry had not the lonesome wailing contralto lament that one may listen to in the Kerry mountains, when the dark hounds are away ^(in the high places,) merged in the darkness of the heather.

The close kinship of England & The United States could not be more vividly demonstrated than it is by ~~means~~ the tales in these books. Nothing but occasional turns of speech, twists of idiom, remind the British reader that the riders are not followers of his own hunt. I suppose it is the imported English & Irish huntsmen who have seen to it that no jot or tittle of the hunting etiquette of the Old Country is abated in the New. There is no purist, no Scottish Elder more puritanically rigid in observance of the tenets of his creed, than is the professional huntsman in walking in the narrow way laid down for him by the Past-Masters (in every sense of the words) of British Foxhunting.

to not a busy week

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And the ^{present-day} descendants of the men who in past centuries brought over-seas with them the British traditions, have been confirmed in the faith in which they were bred, by the huntsmen whom they have taken from English & Irish hunts. It is noticeable in these books that the huntsmen, & the grooms, have nearly all got Irish names. It is only by small variations in the technicalities of the Chase that we may realise we are not reading of hunts in Meath, or in East Galway, or in the County Cork. And also, it must be admitted, by the class of the jumps, which would seem to be of a nature calculated to have ~~as~~ selective an effect on horses & riders as any yawning Meath ditch, or stone-faced North-Cork "double", or towering Galway wall. One reads of a "bar-way" - (a term that implies a place supposed to be jumpable) - of solid rails, of which even Colonel Weatherford says he "never saw such a jump! It's to the top of your cap, Madden!" and one holds one's breath as "the roan horse strode on towards the greatest jump ever navigated in our country, or, I believe, ever will be."

And, again, such a place as is faced by Colonel Weatherford & an unknown English girl, on "a small clean-bred brown mare of exquisite quality", is ^(mercifully) not often encountered in the Old Country.

"In front of me I saw a line of willows, & then beyond them a dark stream far too wide to jump, & on the far side, three feet from the bank, rose a five-board fence. It must be jumped, or jumped at, from the

bottom of the unknown stream. I pulled up."

Thus the Colonel,

Nevertheless —

But he may tell the rest of the story himself.

The books are not all about Hunting.

There are accounts of race-meetings that leave the sympathetic reader breathless. There are a couple of dog-fights, & even a Cock fight, that are certainly better to read about than they would have been to see — a dog-fight being, in my ^{contemptible} opinion, best realized in print — but they make very good reading.

And, as may be inferred from what has been written, so do all these stories.

bottom of the mountain stream. I pulled
up."

Then the Colonel.

None the less — Bill.

But he may take the root of the ship himself.
The books are not all about history.
There are accounts of race history, but
I think the majority of the books are about
and maybe reports from what has been done
— so are many one of these books.

I am right or wrong, I am not sure. But
I am not sure. I am not sure. I am not sure.
I am not sure. I am not sure. I am not sure.
I am not sure. I am not sure. I am not sure.
I am not sure. I am not sure. I am not sure.
I am not sure. I am not sure. I am not sure.